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ABSTRACT

This report reviews current issues in vocational education and discusses their relationship to the California Statewide Longitudinal Study (SLS) of community college students. After a brief outline of the development of vocational education in the community college, current issues identified in a series of studies of vocational education in California are presented, including a lack of program flexibility, poor implementation of open entry/exit programs, the mismatch between jobs and training, and funding problems. Next, the report presents national issues reflected in the SLS (i.e., changes in the involvement of the federal government and changing demographics) and particular issues facing California (e.g., the delineation between the functions of high schools and community colleges, course classification, general education requirements, and tuition and fees). The following section examines the ways in which these issues are being addressed by state and federal legislatures, industry, and the educational community. After a discussion of policy questions raised by the SLS, the report outlines SLS findings related to policies in the areas of curriculum design and delivery, student enrollment patterns, the special needs of vocational students, and the changing student population. Finally, a series of recommendations are offered for curriculum modification, special services, competency-based modular instruction, and industry cooperation. (KL)

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# VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

# AND

# NATIONAL PRIORITIES

A Presentation to:

The California Community College Forum
on the
Student Accountability Model Longitudinal Study

By:

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MAY 1982

# VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES

## Vocational Education Administration in the Community Colleges

Vocational education is an integral part of the comprehensive community college movement. The junior college existed when the Smith Hughes Act passed in 1917, and some of the technical institutes were in operation as early as 1862. As the junior college addressed the goal of providing transfer education to the four year institutions it acquired the departmental designs of those institutions. As a result, business, health, science, engineering and other professional programs were able to form the base for programs which would later be designed to provide for certificate programs in vocational education. (Vaughan 1980)

It was a natural progression of the community colleges to embrace vocational education program growth spurred on by the Vocational Education Act of 1963. This legislation moved vocational education from the narrow identification with trade and industry training skills, broadening the scope of programs, into the seven substantive areas of vocational education as currently used. Further impetus was also given to new and emerging occupations.

The passage of the Vocational Education Act of 1963, and the separation of the community colleges from the secondary education system in 1968, set the stage for the expansion of the missions of the colleges and also the development of certificate programs and short-term vocational education. As emphasis was redirected from the transfer function to the broader missions now encompassed by the community colleges, admininistration of vocational education programs was given more attention and expertise.

By 1975 the growth of vocational education programs had reached a point where the state expenditures were in excess of $500 million dollars. Since there seemed to be no end to the growth, this drew the attention of the legislature and the beginning of a series of studies and budgetary constraints, to these programs. The early critiques of the vocational education programs were oriented to funding issues. Concerns such as program duplication and the amount of reimbursement by the state above actual program costs led to the capping of growth, regional planning and delineation of function all under the auspices of the Regional Adult and Vocational Education Councils (RAVEC) (Nyre 1980).

What Are the Current Issues?

Once the issue of cost of providing vocational education had been broached, the legislature and other research organizations became interested in the scope, quality and effectiveness of the entire vocational education delivery system. This included not only the community college, but the secondary system, its adult programs, the new regional occupational programs/centers and private organizations. Wilson Riles commissioned a study from the Department of Education; the Legislative Analysts' Office completed a study, and the legislature commissioned its study through AB 576. (Paul 1980)

Over eight studies were completed when consideration is given to the studies from the public and private sector. While some differences exist in each of the studies, the same themes keep being identified. These issues will reflect on the California vocational programs; however, the issues will tie to National vocational education priorities and the implementation of contemporary needs. Those issues which still have currency today and relate to the scope of the Statewide Longitudinal Study are:

- *A lack of Flexibility to Change the Structure, Organization and Delivery of Vocational Programs* Most of the public schools were not willing to change from the traditional semester pattern of offering programs. Because of an inability to provide for short-term training, the need for employees would be gone by the time training was completed.

- *Poor Implementation of Open Entry/Exit Vocational Programs* While numerous programs exist which claim to be open entry/exit in design, few of them call for pre/post assessment of competencies; are not mediated, modularized or individualized. It is not only the lack of experience and commitment to this teaching style but also the cost of providing adequate training stations in the class setting to provide this type of instruction.

- *Funding Systems for Vocational Education Contribute to the Problems* Several of the most needed vocational program are expensive to operate due to required student teacher ratios, state of the art equipment, and collective bargaining agreements. The current system does not provide incentives to education or industry to cooperate in the educational venture of meeting employment needs.

- *Remedial Skills, Values and Work Ethics are Still Needed* These studies continue to address the concern of the employment community of graduates' inability to comprehend, communicate, computate, or cope in the working environment. A stress is still given to the need for students to know basic economics, develop inter-personal skills and to have a commitment to the work ethic. Some businesses still contend that if the students have these competencies that they can provide the training on the job.

- *A Mis-Match Exists Between Available Jobs and Available Training*

  *Due to the fixed structure of public education and other factors, industry was increasingly concerned about the inability of the system to turn out a labor supply in sufficent quantity to meet labor needs. Many of the programs which do offer this training are not providing students with competencies to industry standards.*

- *Specific National Priorities are not Being Addressed Effectively*

  *Some of the studies have found that women have lost ground in the area of wage adjustment, apprenticeships still discriminate against minorities and women and that access is not significantly different for some of the target groups than it was prior to 1976.*

*Very few of the commissions and reports were completed under any form of research design which would lead to scientific evidence that these, in fact, were the issues which were responsible for the effectiveness, or lack of effectiveness, of vocational programs. In addition to the previous concerns, there are issues which have been brought about because of the economic conditionsof the Nation and the demographic change of its population. These issues, as much as any others, have a decison role in community college vocational education and are reflected in the Student Longitudinal Study:*

- *The Federal Education Involvement is Changing The previous role of providing for social change is now being changed. While some attention will continue to be given to special needs groups and to the unemployment issues, new emphasis will be given to:*

  . *Revitalization of industry and an increase in American productivity capacity.*

  . *Economic zone tax credits as a means of encouraging business to move into areas of high unemployment.*

- Military spending and high technology training which will improve the defense position of the United States.
- Block grant systems will be developed for adult and vocational education with the intent of returning these programs back to the local jurisdictions.

- The Demographics of the Population are Changing There is an aging of the population and the number of workers in the traditional entry-level age cohort is declining. Combine this with a high technology explosion which is changing the nature of work and a number of issues are rasied for the way vocational education is provided.

In addition to the demographic, economic and Federal priorities which have been discussed, the State of California has particular issues which are affecting the entire community college setting, but also have some meaning in relation to this study:

- Delineation of Function Between Secondary and Community Colleges There are concerns being generated regarding the appropriate role of the community college in remedial education, English as a second language, short term vocational education and other types of instruction which are offered, both by the community colleges, and secondary adult programs. Most of the discussion revolves around cost as much as appropriateness.
- Development of a Course Classification System Somewhat tied to the previous issue has been the process by which colleges will classify courses into credit and non-credit offerings. At first, the issue was tied to delineation of function and now it is centered on differentiation of funding.

- *General Education Requirements* Recently all three systems of California's public higher education system have reviewed and modified the general education requirements and the entry requirements of first year students. This will have an impact on the community colleges and, to some degree, the vocational education programs which they offer.
- *Tuition and Fees are Being Discussed* To meet the financing shortfall in operational costs, a number of colleges have increased student fees and the legislature has continued to give serious thought to tuitions. With California holding out as the only state without tuition, it is not probable that this issue will remain much longer.

*How Are These Issues Being Addressed?*

Public education, in general, is under tremendous economic and financial pressure. The state of the National economy and the financing mechanism is magnifying the problems which are brought about in the issues which face all of community college education, not just vocational education. The financial capability of the colleges is forcing these institutions to evaluate programs, services, costs and priorities which have culled out some of the issues which came about because of the growth in the seventies.

This has not removed the concerns of the legislature and many of the specific issues are currently under legislative review. Among the issues are.

- Credit/non-credit courses as they relate to course classification
- The use of the part-time teacher in community colleges
- Adult education offerings
- Special education, particularly as it relates to the Department of Developmental Services

Most of these issues have been made a part of the financing bill for the State and will call for some reporting prior to the finalizing of a finance bill for 1982-83. This has been complicated by the fact that the Federal government has reduced its commitment to vocational education financing through the traditional Vocational Education Act and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. This one area may not be as critical to the community colleges if the military spending bills and high technology interests expand the availablity of funding to meet these needs.

Industry has become vitally interested in the issues which relate to the pool of available employees, and the quality of current instruction. There is significant movement, at the present time, to involve industry in the operation and support of vocational training programs. Among the activities are:

- Contracting with the industry to provide training at the site by the community colleges.
- Foundations are being organized to provide a means of locating and distributing funds for instructional equipment, facilities, and even human resources.
- Industry has been directly involved in the development of curriculum for high technology program needs.

The issue of curriculum change has been addressed more effectively by the community college than by other segments of the educational community. The colleges have made positive changes in the flexibility of its programs; they are addressing new teaching stratagies such as television, computer assisted instruction, assessment of prior learning and other means of helping students to reach educational goals in a minimum of time. This does not imply that there is not a lot of room for growth, but it is not a void in the system.

*What are the Policy Questions?*

*The Statewide Longitudinal Study is a useful tool, as a research instrument, to look at the policy questions which will be facing the community colleges in the next few years. While activity exists in reviewing the issues raised regarding financing, curriculum, industrial cooperation and the changing social structures, among others, there are still specific policy questions which are going to need direct attention. Among those are:*

- *A Re-Evaluation of the Missions of the California Community Colleges*

  *Because of financial factors, many community colleges throughout California are reviewing their missions and to what degree those missions should be supported by community college funds. Overall, the basic seven missions including occupational training, transfer education, general education, basic skills, life-long learning, cultural and recreational, and support services have not changed; however, the degree to which those are supported by state funding is changing. (Franz 1979)*

  *Kessler, in his study of transfer students for the University of California at Los Angeles, and Sheldon, in the Statewide Longitudinal Study, both raise questions regarding the traditional views that have been held by professional administrators regarding the missions of the California Community Colleges. Certainly, the degree to which occupational education prepares students for initial employment and the length of time it takes students to complete programs, are key concerns which will need further consideration.*

- *The Level of Support of the Missions of the California Community Colleges With State Funds* *Part of the problem raised in the study of general education requirements, the credit/non-credit issue and the delineation of function between adult education and continuing education, relates the cost of such instruction. The legislature, in considering changes to reduce the State's burden to support education,*

is looking at processes which will force the narrowing of the scope of offerings in the California Community Colleges, as well as in other delivery systems. The Statewide Longitudinal Study supports the need to deal with upgrading of employees in the labor market, and to provide for career changes. Students certainly express high regard for the life-long learning capability of institutions. Strengthening that mission will have considerable impact on how such programs are financed.

- Knowing Who We Serve In the Statewide Longitudinal Study, a study completed by the State of California on perceptions of the public about vocational education (Franz 1979), and a telephone survey completed by the Coast Community Colleges (Butler 1980), the question is raised regarding the ways in which students perceive the community colleges. Both studies reinforce the community perceptions about the seven missions of the California Community Colleges including: occupational training, transfer education, general education, basic skills, life-long learning, cultural and recreational, and support services.

  The responses, as indicated in the Statewide Longitudinal Study, raise the question about respondents giving socially acceptable answers. When vocational educators look at research data, the research technique should insure that responses reflect student activities rather than student perceptions.

- Public Education's Commitment to Industry A major issue in the last year has been the commitment of the California Community Colleges to provide for adequate labor force needs in business and industry. There has been legislation to motivate both the community colleges and industry to link, to provide for interagency cooperation, and to develop a policy for equipment and training for the State of California. (Bogetich 1981). It is time for the community colleges and

other deliverers of vocational education to address the competencies needed by industry and to encourage students to become a part of those industries which have the most potential for placement.

- Industry's Commitment to Public Education Policy questions will need consideration regarding the amount of support that industry gives to public education in order to meet the high technology needs of industry in the next decade, and also the commitment, by industry, toward its educational support of employees. Should that commitment be limited only to meeting the employment requirements of industry or does industry address the life-long learning requirements of its employees as well? The Coast study and the Statewide Longitudinal Study imply that individuals place personal value in education. Industry's commitment to assist employees in meeting individual educational goals could certainly have direct economic impact on the community and the industries.

- The Federal Role in Vocational Education Probably the most important policy question which exists for the 1980's is the federal role in employment and training. The administration is strongly moving away from its commitment to the states to supplement employment and training efforts, leaving those decisions at the state level. Patrick Choate, an Economic Analyst from TRW, in addressing the American Vocational Association Convention in 1981, establishes specific roles for industry, for the federal government and for local education agencies in the provision of a national policy direction for employment training. (Choate 1981).

A review of the areas in Choate's study identify relationships to the major issues in the Statewide Longitudinal Study. This author says that we must meet remedial objectives, provide for entry-level training, give attention to the displaced worker, deal more effectively

with upgrading and retraining, and finally, provide a role for the federal government in addressing countercyclical employment. Speaking from this industrial base, it is evident that there is a place for national policy and that the process and contributions of the community colleges to that policy could have an economic pay-off for both the state and the nation.

How Does the Study Relate to these Policy Issues?

As vocational education administrators reflect on the issues of the 1980's, the Statewide Longitudinal Study is one source of information needed to formulate decisions or to provide the base for further study. No complete decision on addressing priorities of the 1980's or dealing with the national priorities can be found in the Statewide Longitudinal Study or in any one source. Among the prevailing conditions and decisions which need to be made, this study addresses:

- Curriculum Design and Delivery The study shows that students are not enrolling in vocational programs or transfer programs as tradition might dictate. Vocational students, as others, use the community colleges most often for short-term personal goals. Table 3-4 is most illustrative of this point.

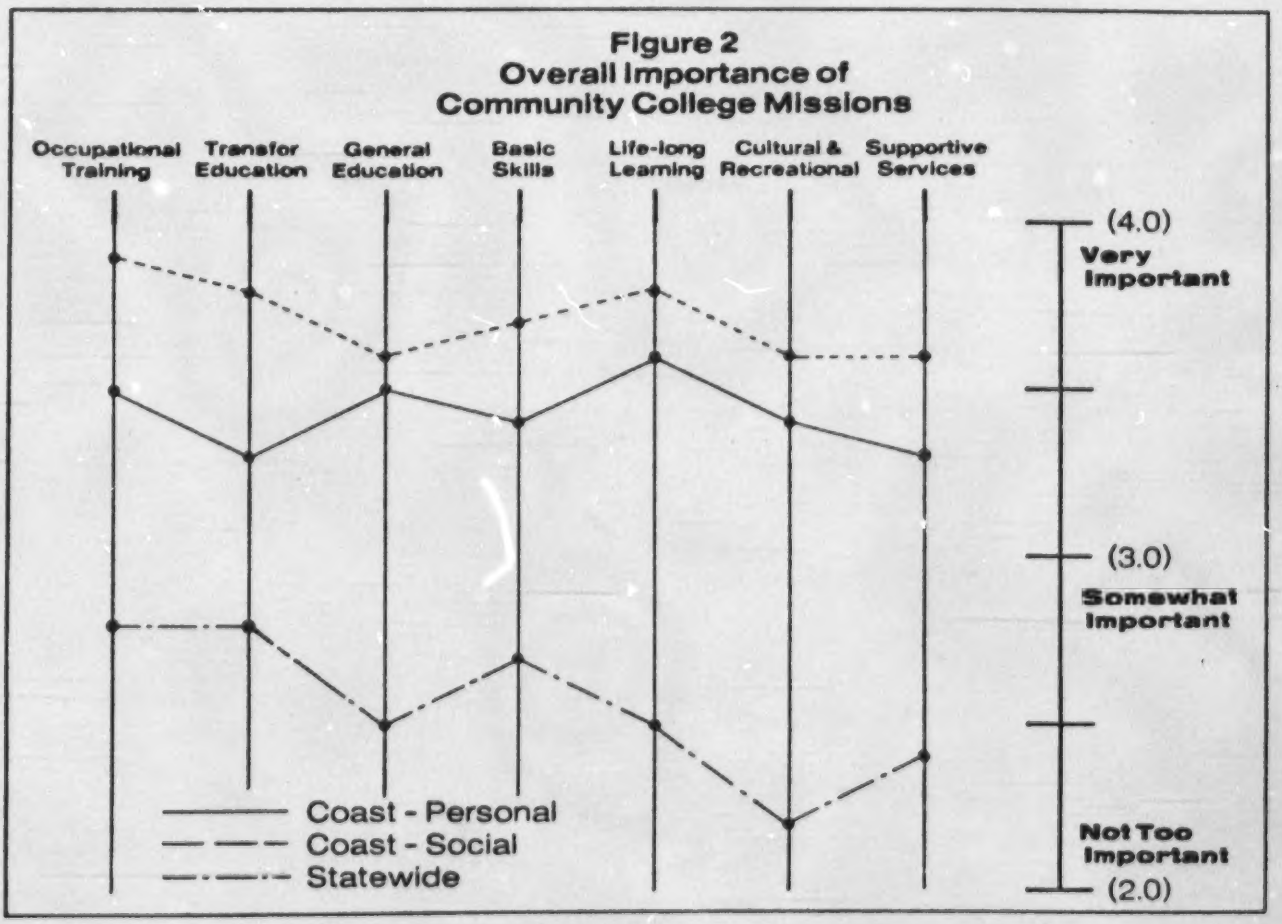
Table 3-4. Vocational Function by Percentage

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Vocational Program Completer | 345 | 13.6 |
| Job Seeker | 1153 | 45.5 |
| Job Upgrader | 793 | 31.3 |
| Second Careerist | 204 | 8.1 |
| License Maintainer | 39 | 1.5 |
| Total | 2534 | |

*The purposes for which courses are traditionally operated are in question and the types of students being served are in question, also.*

*If vocational administrators are not identifying their population and addressing programs to these needs, the effectiveness of the programs may diminish. The study shows that generally students are pleased with the occupational programs in the California Community Colleges and they are in fact meeting individual goals. To further illustrate this point, a look at the data from the Coast Community College telephone survey on perceptions of the missions shows a strong support for occupational training and life-long learning.*

**Figure 2**
**Overall Importance of Community College Missions**



Neither study specifies what type of curricular changes are going to be necessary, but certainly the study supports a need to change our curricular direction, our flexibility, and our timing on occupational programs and there will be a large need to more fully address this in the next decade.

- Financing Will Need to Reflect Student Patterns One of the most important finding of the study is that students are not following typical two-year attendance patterns. The study illustrates this in the prototypes which are a useful supplement to our current classification system of vocational students described in the Student Accountability Model (SAM).

  One of the specific problems that vocational administrators face is the judgmental trap of the completer/leaver, particularly since the study shows that many of our leavers leave for a most positive reason---they have met their goals. The phenomena of a majority of students enrolling in colleges only taking one or two courses, paralleled with the fact that many of these students feel they are reaching their goals before completing courses, would imply that a significantly different type of financing system may be required. Parallel this practice by students with the legislative concerns of whom we should be serving as it relates to recreational pursuits, various support services, and the life-long learning aspects of the missions of the California Community Colleges, and it is apparent that the traditional model of financing that has been used in California may be inappropriate.

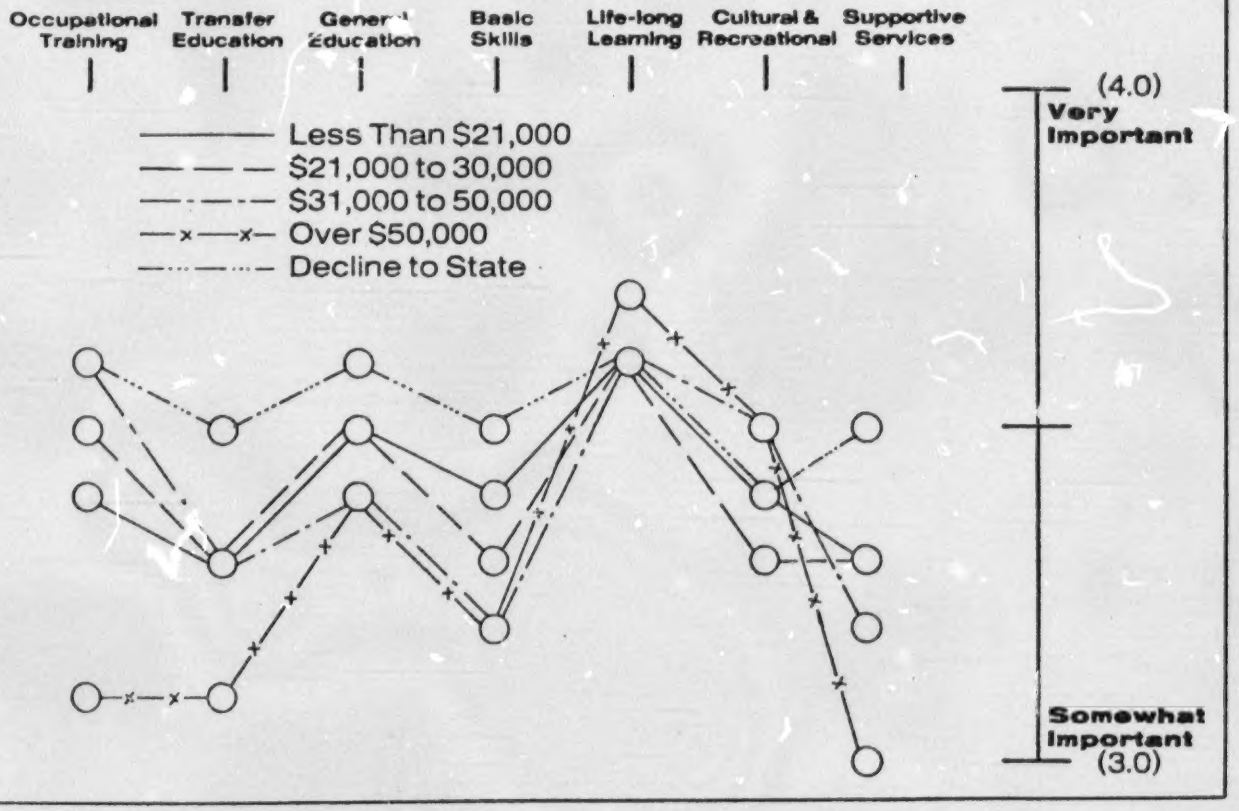
- The Special Needs Students Involved in Vocational Programs The Statewide Longitudinal Study has important data regarding the various special needs groups including the handicapped, minorities, and economically disadvantaged persons. Unfortunately, the sample, as

related in this study, was not appropriate in size to draw conclusions from the data. However, it does show that there is not a significant difference between individuals in these special needs groups and the accomplishments of the general population of the community college. That would imply community colleges are doing an effective job. However, a need is raised in this particular study to address research that would show, specifically, the types of concerns and the depth to which the community colleges' vocational programs are providing direction toward the national priorities in gender equity, non-traditional occupations, and other service to the handicapped and disadvantaged.

Certainly, as the community colleges move into the next decade and face shifts in population and the needs of these special groups intensify, change and adaption will be an operational need. The presumption, from the general data of the Coast survey and the Statewide survey of perceptions of the community colleges, shows the general population thinks highly of the community colleges and have used them as a source of first resort in dealing with a short-term problem such as language and short-term vocational skills.

- Special Services as They Relate to Vocational Education One of the interesting, but inconclusive, findings of the study has to do with the types of special services that are provided to students: financial aids, tutoring, remedial instruction, guidance, career planning and others. The perceptions of students as they relate to special services is going to vary depending, again, on the type of student being served. In the Coast study, a number of criteria were measured against the perceptions of the Coast population. Taking income level, you can see that the needs for support services are directly related to the income of the population. (See Figure 15 on the next page).

**Figure 15**
**Income Level**
**Personal Perspective**




*One of the findings that interested me, in this portion of the study, was an indication that assessment of students is going to be an important variable in terms of helping us to identify more directly what services ought to be provided to students. Certainly, our thinking about support services through assessment programs should address a broader range of needs than current assessment is doing. This is certainly supported by the data in the study.*

- *The Changing Population in Vocational Education* The data from the study does not address specific policy issues in terms of the community college student population changes. However, there is a changing population; that population is getting older; the students have individual goals that do not match our own goals. What is apparent is

that the students are career oriented, they do not have specific time-lines for reaching their goals. While the programs have been effective in meeting specific needs, there is room for adjustment to address student goals as the system is being used by the students.

This study validates the fact that remedial instruction, basic skills, assessment and support services are utilized by the students; they are important, particularly in dealing with those students who come into the system without the competencies necessary to compete in the University of California or the CSUC system. With the change in the general education requirements of the four-year system which has been alluded to earlier in the study, it is evident that there will be a larger proportion of students who do not meet those competencies coming to the community colleges, particularly after 1984.

Life-Long Learning and the Vocational Education Programs The study corroborates the fact that individuals will continue to use the community colleges long after they have reached their initial goals and that the population looks to the colleges as a vehicle for carrying out life-long learning objectives. This is important, not only for our academic programs, but for the vocational programs as well, because it implies that there is a need and an economic payback to the community when students can come back to their local community colleges to meet specific upgrading requirements or to achieve promotional goals.

Certainly, the issue of how we finance life-long learning is going to be important, and the perspective of whether the government and its citizens should underwrite life-long learning is going to be an issue that society will have to face. That does not deny the fact that life-long learning is a very important variable of those individuals who have effectively used the community college. That use supports the fact that life-long learning is a viable mission of the community

colleges and that the community colleges can no longer be considered merely two-year institutions.

- Collective Bargaining and the Vocational Programs This is the one issue that the Statewide Longitudinal Study does not address. However, the study implies so many changes in the way vocational education is offered to meet the needs of the population that it certainly is going to have an impact and create issues in collective bargaining. Some issues are already at the legislative level as the legislature attempts to limit the number of part-time instructors, and to expand industry programs in contracting with the community colleges. Both of these issues will create collective bargaining problems. While the study does not direct its findings toward collective bargaining, it holds implications for how we deal with collective bargaining in the future.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The Statewide Longitudinal Study is filled with a number of data which are important to the direction in which vocational education administration will move in the fucure and how it will address national priorities. In the pure sense, the national priorities are formulating themselves; there are few recommendations which can come out of the study unless some change is made in the route in which federal involvement in vocational education is going to take place.

It has been reported, earlier in the study, that the federal government is trying to divest itself of its vocational education responsibility and to return that responsibility to the states. However, there are indications that the federal government will stay involved in employment and training programs through the Department of Labor; that there will be some direction to providing high technology training for industries that are serving the defense movement and for the defense movement itself. There are certainly indications that as the nation addresses productivity reduction and the revitalization of its industries,

that there is a viable place for vocational education. All of the federal thrusts support the need for the community colleges and their ability to serve these national priorities than it does to other segments of the educational delivery system. (Parenll 1982).

In conclusion, the following recommendations for action are being made:

- Major Emphasis Should be Given to the Redesign of the Curriculum Faced with the data of the study and the direction of the national priorities, attention should be given to the way we offer curriculum for vocational education. Effort needs to be given to providing more flexibility; for dealing more appropriately with short-term training, and in addressing the specific needs of students and the competencies of industry. This will call for a realignment of the system as it currently exists.
- Special Services Should be Given a New Look Considering the effectiveness of special services in helping students meet educational goals, and the propensity to reduce special services as finances are reduced, there needs to be a reconsideration of the dismemberment of special services activities. If anything, the attention should be given to better assessment programs so that students can be better assisted in achieving their goals. A number of the prototypes which are defined in this study specifically lend themselves to better assessment and may help the community college to better serve those individuals.
- Providing Competency-Based Modular Instruction The findings of the study show how the majority of community college students use the community colleges today. There is a strong indication that a better look needs to be taken at competency-based, modular, individualized instruction. This direction is supported by concerns raised by industry and others regarding the delivery of vocational education. The

study tends to corroborate the fact that instruction offered in modular format meeting specific competencies will better address itself to the needs of the students that we serve today.

- Getting the Industry Linkage with the Vocational Program It is obvious from the Statewide Longitudinal Study data that students themselves are meeting their business and industry needs through the use of the community college and this should continue to take place. However, increasing the industry linkages to meet student needs more explicitly can be accomplished if administrators will utilize community college programs to meet specific industry needs for instruction. This can be accomplished through better use of advisory committees, more appropriate involvement of the business community in curriculum design, and contracting to meet specialized training needs of industry. Not all of this need necessarily be funded out of the public dollar. Some consideration should be given to an appropriate sharing of costs with industry.

There are other findings which could come out of the study; other conclusions and recommendations which could be drawn. However, at this point, these are the most appropriate recommendations which can be made to deal with the national priorities in the decade of the 1980's. There are a number of challenges which face us. Fortunately, this quality study exists to identify the students we serve.

There will probably be some challenges from the legislature regarding how community colleges serve students. In my estimation, this study shows that the colleges have done an effective and worthwhile job. The community colleges cannot be criticized for meeting student needs---they should receive accolades. However, in the area of productivity, the colleges need to find ways of meeting those student needs more effectively and using available resources wisely. This will call for some remodeling and rethinking of our processes. The tools are in our hands.

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